



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Parent Advisory Committee

October 15, 2021 (9:30 a.m.)

Via Zoom

Welcome & Introductions

Dr. Clemons welcomed everyone and started the meeting with introductions. The purpose for the Parent Advisory Committee is to allow parents an opportunity to express ideas and concerns and gives Dr. Clemons an opportunity to address parent concerns and share information about the school division.

Items from Parent Advisory Members

Felicia Hall (Abingdon) - Spoke about the bus situation, indicating the pickup and drop off times can vary greatly. Mrs. Hall recognizes there is a driver shortage, but it is an issue for families. In addition, sitting three children to a seat on the bus is concerning, especially during the pandemic. Mrs. Hall also indicated at a recent parent conference, she was only allowed a fifteen-minute block to meet with her child's teacher, while parents were lined up in the hallway. It was rushed and didn't allow her time to discuss the issues that were needed. Mrs. Hall said teachers are overwhelmed. Her child is behind because of having COVID and has been placed in intervention for reading. Mrs. Hall indicated she only recently became aware of this. Homework is not sent home and her daughter's grades are low. Last year, Mrs. Hall homeschooled because Canvas was frustrating and now this year, Canvas is still being used to access homework. Her family is considering private school, but it would be a financial burden. Mrs. Hall stated she wants her child to go to school safely, on time, and to get an education. Dr. Clemons asked to have additional conversation with Mrs. Hall outside of the meeting to further discuss her concerns. Dr. Clemons explained there is a driver shortage across the nation and most students are back in school and riding the bus. Routes have been split and doubled and up to three students are in some seats, which the seats can accommodate, although it is not preferred. GCPS has just approved a pay increase for drivers and has also approved having stop arm cameras installed on buses. Mrs. Rachel Blankenship (Abingdon/Page parent and GCPS Executive Director of Human Resources & Compliance) explained how Abingdon, Achilles, and Botetourt have had a few double runs, where some students are arriving earlier and others later. Currently, five potential drivers are in training and if those five are successful, it will greatly help the situation. Dr. Clemons added that some states have called in the National Guard to drive buses. Dr. Clemons and Mrs. Blankenship also discussed close contacts, which is defined as someone who is less than six feet of someone for more than fifteen minutes, even if masked regarding adults or Pre-K. Students who sit together on the bus are considered close contacts in a situation where COVID occurs among one of them. Dr. Clemons also said parent conferences may occur, but if over fifteen minutes, participants would need to be at least six feet apart.

Katey Legg (Page) - Suggested transportation update the software being used for bus routes. Her family recently moved into a subdivision and their street/house was not showing up for transportation, which caused issues for her child being picked up by the bus. Mrs. Legg printed out GIS maps to help and indicated the transportation department was very helpful, but it was frustrating at that time.

Maureen & Brian Ankrom (Botetourt) - Had some items that were more teacher specific, but will email if other issues arise.

Christina Chavalía (Achilles) - Is hopeful her second grade daughter will have a normal year. She recently received a letter stating that her daughter was not performing at the second grade level and will be talking to her teacher to see what can be done. This is the first time a teacher has communicated with her about this and she expects it has probably been ongoing. It may be child specific and the pandemic may also have played a contributing factor. Dr. Clemons said some students have done well during the pandemic and some have had difficulties. In person instruction is critical in helping address the loss of learning that has occurred. Each child should be looked at and worked with to meet his/her individual needs.

Jessi Kittrell (Peasley/GHS)– In response to Mrs. Chavalía’s concern, Mrs. Kittrell indicated there are tests (Star, etc.) given once or twice each year that will show exactly where students stand based on scores. Mrs. Kittrell also said she has been in the situation Mrs. Hall is in and found continued communication with teachers about the issue proved beneficial. One teacher spent a couple of hours showing her how to use Canvas in his personal time. Dr. Clemons said staff will do what’s needed to resolve situations. Mrs. Michelle Stone (GHS) added that Pals testing was also used and she also understands the frustrations of Mrs. Chavalía and Mrs. Hall and offered help with Canvas. Dr. Clemons said we know there are kinks to work out and will do what is needed to help students be successful.

Superintendent’s Updates – The GCPS website has been updated to be more user friendly. There is a link for “Need assistance - Who do you call” if you have an issue and don’t know who to contact. Quick Links are available for many resources, including one for Canvas resources for students and families, as well as curriculum resources. If you have a concern, let us know. Dr. Clemons mentioned the rumors of Critical Race Theory being taught, but indicated it is not being taught in our schools.

Upcoming Important Dates – Dr. Clemons indicated the Joint School Board/Board of Supervisors meeting on October 19, 2021 will be a critical meeting. The transportation facility will be part of the conversation. The topic has been discussed for over twenty years. The current bus garage location could be a prime piece of property for economic growth and development for the county if the transportation facility is relocated to the new Page site. The GCPS Capital Improvement Plan will also be discussed. A full renovation of GHS is part of the plan. If a full scale renovation is not done it will not serve the community in the years to come. The 47 million being discussed will only serve to update HVAC, roof and other needed repairs. The School Board has not heard from the Attorney General regarding if the sales tax can be used to pay old debt. It could be a stream of funding to benefit school construction and renovation. Sales tax could even fund a brand new school if all of the sales tax were used for it. When a sales tax bill is presented to the General Assembly, there is no guarantee it will be approved. Dr. Clemons hopes that what is currently occurring in Gloucester regarding the use of sales tax will not impact other localities and mentioned that Isle of White did not have their request approved last year.

The upcoming election is very important to the county and schools. Educate yourself on the candidates and what they stand for when you go to the polls. The county needs board members who have the best interest in moving the county forward. Mrs. Kittrell indicated she hasn’t always thought as much about smaller elections, but this year, has printed out the ballot so she can be prepared and make the best choice when she goes to the polls.

Dr. Clemons encouraged members to watch or attend the Joint School Board/Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, October 19. The Capital Improvement Plan was presented to the planning committee last night (October 14) and will be discussed on Tuesday, October 19.

Dr. Clemons indicated that he will ensure that Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Chavalía are contacted regarding the concerns shared by each.

Adjournment – 10:35 a.m.

Next Meeting: December 10, 2021 (1:00 p.m.) – Location (TBD)